

SAFETY

Education



Youth
joins in



Road Safety: what have we learnt?

74th Road Safety Congress: 23-25 February 2009, Blackpool

How will lessons learnt shape a new decade of policy?

Tremendous progress has been achieved in reducing death and injury on the UK's roads, despite massive increases in traffic. However, this reduction has not been achieved evenly for all road users – some groups have fared much better than others.

Shaping the future:

Road safety is entering a crucial period of evaluating strategies for the next decade. Congress will explore the lessons learnt, and how past approaches, policies and interventions, both successful and not, can help shape the future.

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- *Road Safety Evaluation*
- *Motorcycling*
- *Evaluating the Role of Vehicle Technology*

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Inside this issue...



News 2

Centre fined

Step forward 3

£1.6m for safety education

Safety with attitude 4

LASER in Warwickshire

Job search 6-8

Youth success

Road awareness 9

Students in the cinema

Children at risk 10-11

What they think

News extra 12

Young drivers



Managing Editor
Janice Cave

Editorial Consultant
Jim Barrow

Occupational Safety Adviser
Roger Bibbings

Risk Education Adviser
Jenny McWhirter

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**The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents,
Edgbaston Park,
353 Bristol Road,
Birmingham B5 7ST.**

Telephone: 0121 248 2000

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Safeside launched

Safeside at Eastside is a community safety facility which will be an interactive and innovative safety complex featuring real-life scenarios where young people and other visitors can experience in a safe, controlled environment in order to learn how to stay safe. It has been constructed as part of the relocation of West Midlands Fire Service to its new headquarters in Vauxhall Road, Nechells, Birmingham.

RoSPA has been working with Steve Ward, project coordinator, Pete Wilson, manager and Rob Hattersley, education officer, to advise about the content of scenarios, including home safety. The centre will be open on a trial basis from November and fully operational from January 2009.

While the first groups to visit will be the upper primary age-group, the intention is to include all vulnerable groups including older people and adults with learning difficulties.

Safeside offers:

- Sixteen life-sized scenarios
- Experiential learning
- A stimulating environment
- A safe learning environment

People will be visiting from all seven local authority areas in the West Midlands. It is set to become a huge focal point for schools and communities in this region and beyond. The intention is to make each scenario as adaptable as possible to the safety needs of many age-groups.

The designers have built on the previous experience of existing interactive safety centres throughout the UK and fully exploited a huge space. A particular innovation is the roof garden which is intended to address the demands for learning about the future of the planet in relation to climate change and sustainability issues.

For further information, or to arrange a visit, call 0800 389 5525 or email safeside@wmfs.net or visit www.wmfs.net/safeside.



Speedy Alex

Car-mad Alex Platt had his first driving lesson on his 17th birthday, and passed his driving test six weeks later – and in that time had a two week holiday in Barbados with his college mates!

Now, 12 months later Alex of Woodsmoor, Stockport has gained a Gold Pass in the RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders test at his first attempt – one of the youngest in the

Manchester area to do so.

He has been working in the catering dept of Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport for the past two years, but has his sights set on a wider field – from the cab of a large goods vehicle. Says his mum, Sandra, "Alex has always been interested in cars and driving, and now has ambitions to gain his HGV Class 1 licence and will shortly be enrolling on the Young Drivers' Scheme which also gives him a level 3 NVQ qualification as well as gaining his HGV licence. My husband and I encouraged Alex to do his advanced driver training after getting the car so that it would teach him to respect the car and the road, as most of his friends seemed to be treating their cars like toys as soon as they got their licences, and as he has always wanted to drive for a living we want him to be as safe as possible."

Alex joined the Associate Scheme of the Manchester Group of RoADAR at their Woodley centre, and after eight fortnightly sessions gained the highest pass level possible.

Quietly spoken Alex says, "I was nervous at first but all the volunteer observers were really helpful and built up my confidence and ability, and I learned such a lot from them."

Centre fined over injury

The Health and Safety Executive has warned activity centres to ensure their staff are properly trained, after a child was seriously injured on a school trip.

Kingswood Learning and Leisure (Group) Limited of Norwich, was fined £12,000 with £10,690 costs at Cromer Magistrates Court in August after pleading guilty to breaching section 3(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The prosecution follows a HSE investigation into an incident in April 2007, when eight-year-old Mickey Carter-Browne, from Silsoe, was injured during a school trip to the Kingswood Activity Centre at West Runton. He fell six metres from a climbing wall, sustaining a broken

ankle and bruising to his pelvis, upper leg, left ankle and arms.

HSE Inspector Steve Gill said: "This was an unfortunate incident which could have been prevented had the correct safety procedures been followed and the staff undertaking the activities properly trained and supervised. Instead, a child was injured and spent 10 weeks in plaster, largely confined to a wheelchair, and another 10 on crutches.

"It is important to remember that the adventure activities sector as a whole has almost always demonstrated good practices in risk assessment and management, allowing activities to take place safely and enjoyably.

"HSE firmly believes that

children must have the opportunity to participate in adventurous activities such as climbing, which are fun, healthy and provide experience and education in risk management. Statistically, one incident does not alter the good track record of an overall safe and well-managed sector."

The HSE investigation identified that when the karabiner (metal loop) was attached to the harness, the screw had not been tightened, which allowed the karabiner to open when a load was applied. The investigation also found that the training and supervision procedures at the centre were not sufficient for the activities being carried out, and were not being routinely followed on the ground.

RoSPA in £1.6m step forward

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has taken a big step towards keeping children safe across the country with over £1.6 million grant for practical safety education for children.

The grant will establish a Child Safety Education Coalition and was awarded to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents in partnership with the National Children's Bureau.

The CSEC will work to improve the provision of practical safety education to give more children and young people the skills, knowledge and confidence to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, for example in a smoke-filled bedroom or unsafe kitchen, and so to help reduce the likelihood of injury or harm to children and young people. RoSPA and NCB will also work together to co-ordinate the distribution of safety education for children and young people from all backgrounds.

Children's Minister, Baroness Delyth Morgan said "The CSEC will play an important role in creating opportunities for all children to experience accessible and practical safety education."

Practical safety education also offers children the opportunities to learn safe behaviours and respond to 'hazards' in a realistic environment, teaching them the skills to help keep themselves and their peers safe.

A key focus for CSEC will be vulnerable groups, for example children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are often at the highest risk of preventable accidents.

Peter Cornall, RoSPA's head of leisure safety, said "As a result of this funded coalition, more children will be equipped with valuable life-long skills. Through practical

safety education, they will learn how to recognise hazards, take and use safety advice, make judgements about possible harm to themselves or others, take some responsibility for their own and others' safety, and summon help quickly."

Fergus Crow, NCB's assistant director of wellbeing, said "We are delighted to be working in partnership with RoSPA to establish the Child Safety Education Coalition. These vital lessons will not only help them as young people, but the skill and knowledge they gain will be carried forward into their adult lives."

The Child Safety Education Coalition will be encouraging charities working in the area of children's safety education to come together to co-ordinate and expand the provision of safety education activities, such as Crucial Crew, Junior Citizen and RoSPA's Learning About Safety by Experiencing Risk (LASER) programme where children learn by experiencing a range of simulated risky scenarios.

Some of the issues CSEC will address are:

- Making safety education available in England, so more children can benefit
- Nationally co-ordinating child safety education provision and distribute more evenly throughout the country
- Making sure provision is targeted to ensure that vulnerable groups, who are more at risk from accidents, receive safety education (for example children from disadvantaged backgrounds)

Evaluating existing provision of practical safety education across England, in order to measure its impact on children and young people's safety knowledge.



Measured approach

Pupils at a Birtley school are trying a novel approach to encouraging more of their classmates to get some exercise on the way to school.

The seven and eight year old pupils from St. Joseph's Junior School in Birtley have been using a measuring wheel to map out where parents could park their cars and leave a short five minute walk to the school gate.

The idea is to get more children to walk part of their school journey to ease the traffic congestion outside the school gates and to improve children's health. Pupils who already walk their entire journey to school will also be invited to join up with their friends at the five minute walking zone points.

Councillor John McElroy,

Gateshead's cabinet member for transport, says: "Encouraging children to walk to school is not that difficult – but encouraging their parents can be! We hope that when they see the five minute points mapped out, it will encourage them to give it a go!"

David Slowey, headteacher of St Joseph's Junior School, says: "We are very proud of our pupils for taking the initiative in this way. Our school is keen to promote healthy lifestyles."

The five minute walking zone is part of a larger scheme being introduced by Gateshead Council aimed at empowering pupils to promote walking, cycling and public transport within their own schools.

Road safety event with at

A fluorescent-jacketed staff member met each school group on arrival at the Gaydon Motor Heritage Centre and led them to the first scenario in one of a set of marquees. This was the beginning of Live and Dangerous.

Warwickshire County Council's road safety unit funds and staffs this event annually for Year 6 pupils transferring from primary to secondary school. Current national road safety statistics show a doubling of the killed or seriously injured children in the 12-15 year-old age group explains why so many resources are expended on this event.

It is the programme's ninth year of work.

The group were told to get on the coach as they would for any school trip. Once seat-

By Colin Morris

utes is the time it takes for a coach to be engulfed in flames. How long would it take for this group to leave the coach and find a safe place?

At a given signal we released our seatbelts and stood ready to exit. The first attempt took two minutes in a coach which was half-full. How could we improve this time? Back we trooped to have a second go.

One teacher was given the leading role to control who left first and all of us were told to stay in our seats until it was our turn. One teacher and two pupils jumped out first leaving the emergency exit uncrowded. Nobody carried a bag to reduce the delay

dents than house fires, it was appropriate for the firefighters to present this scenario. "Twenty seven children a year die in car crashes: an average class-size," the pupils were told.

The first attempt took two minutes in a coach which was half-full. How could we improve this time?

Seatbelt wearing is still not a habit for every driver or passenger with tragic consequences. This was illustrated by the seatbelt sled's huge force from a slow impact at just five miles an hour

Some computer-generated imagery depicting a road ac-

people died and one suffered brain damage.

The children's heads swivelled to find a real car after an accident in which a cyclist finished under the car and a young child's head had crashed through the front windscreen. "An unbelted toddler becomes a torpedo in

the event of a crash."

Children in the audience could suggest several possible causes for this accident: driver using mobile phone, distracted by the unbelted toddler, unwary cyclist wrongly positioned in the road or unaware of the danger due to the iPod music cabled through his ears? What are you going to do if an accident like this happens while you are out?

The emergency service needs to be told a clear location so they know where to come: shop name, road-name, landmark like a pub perhaps?

One half of the professional acting duo MoMo greeted the children with some slick engagement routines. With children's attention fastened, the two went through the mechanics of keeping alert around roads, making yourself seen, crossing safely and even contributing to carbon dioxide reduction through walking rather than riding in an air-polluting car.

Through choosing a volunteer from the audience and setting a recall activity for him, all the children became involved in helping the volunteer to recall the major teaching points.

Audience answers were lost in the cacophony of shouts. "Evaluations show



ed with seatbelts secured, they were told this scenario was necessary because there had been an horrific accident on a motorway in which people suffered because they could not exit the coach quickly enough. Three min-

in getting out. Nobody pushed or panicked. Result: everyone was out in one minute!

With the fire service attending more road traffic inci-

dent in Northern Ireland showed that the guy without the seatbelt did the damage. "Don't look, if you don't want to see it," the children were warned beforehand. Three

Attitude

that pupils' recall of this information is high," says Alison Williams, Warwickshire road safety advisor.

After lunch when children picnicked on the grass, the next scenario was Cycling and Truck Safety. Two road safety officers and an HGV driver were helping to present it.

One man impersonated the victim of an accident in which his bike had been bent under a wheel of the 44 tonne truck but he had escaped with some cuts, grazes and a bang on the head.

The incident was dramatised to show the different perspectives and motivations of the driver and the cyclist. Children and teachers were also involved in investigating how the accident occurred and how it could have been avoided. What could the driver see?

"The washing machine of death" was a vivid image which children may recall after the visit. What chances we take, it seems, to save a bit of time and sneak through a gap by a truck manoeuvring in the street. How hard it is



managed most multiple choice answers and then two went head-to-head for the tie-breaker. Answer? The cost of one and a half million pounds to be spent each year on the various costs associated with 3,000 injured and 45 deaths

stop, each teenager introduced themselves through interaction with the others or speaking directly to the audience. The emotional impact was powerful as aspects of each character were revealed, and then their involvement directly or indirectly in an accident which had been headline news in the local paper. The 10 to 11 year-olds watched mainly in silence but responded well to the invitation to quiz the actors when they came back to the stage as themselves.

The piece picked up on a number of prevention themes running through the whole event about not using mobiles while you drive, iPods can distract you when you're walking, drink and driving don't mix.

These Year 6 pupils were under some bombardment with information in six different scenarios, using different

techniques. From 10:30 until 14:00 with an hour for lunch, the pace is relentless.

Each group of pupils was generally seated but responding to questions. Some of the scenarios demanded more active participation, in some form of a quiz format. Stark images such as the size of a large truck when you are close to its huge wheels which can suck in a human body may well be recalled as these pupils use the roads more frequently.

The intention is for each pupil to recall their experience and use the knowledge gained in the future, to save a life or reduce a risk on the road. Particularly as they undertake the regular school journeys, whether by car, bus, bike or walking.

Further information can be obtained from: Jane Lees, road safety advisor email jane.lees@warwickshire.gov.uk

Five teenage characters were presented in a lively and realistic manner, by Stratford College drama students

for drivers of large trucks to know that anything is wrong when their field of vision is restricted and the impact of a body or a bike is hardly felt.

"If you can't see the driver, he can't see you."

A quiz entitled "Who wants to be the weakest link?" was the unusual device for making children think about the journey to a new school in September for these Year 6 pupils. Numbers on benches identified six pupils.

With an emphasis on quick answers the contestants

in road accidents could be reduced if children followed what they had learned about keeping safe. The contestants then received slap-its to show how they could be better seen as pedestrians or cyclists.

Five teenage characters were presented in a lively and realistic manner, by Stratford College drama students drawing out the consequences of road accidents long after they have happened.

While waiting at the bus-

Cassius steps in to liaise

Behind this relatively simple job advertisement lay weeks of planning and preparation, but, thanks to five keen young staff at RoSPA, 20 students from local schools and two cooperative teachers RoSPA has been able to fill this key post. Writes Jenny McWhirter.

Cassius Francis has joined RoSPA to help engage young people in our work to save lives and reduce injuries, and to raise awareness of RoSPA's mission with young people.

So why is it so important for RoSPA (and other organisations) to engage with young people, and how did we go about appointing the right person for this impor-

WANTED: Part time youth liaison worker, experience of working with young people; able to work with professionals in youth organisations – and an interest in preventing injuries to young people.

tant task? The promotion of health and well being has always been most successful when professionals work closely with the group whose health or safety they hope to influence, responding to their needs and expectations as well as taking heed of the ev-

idence of harm and of what works to reduce harm.

Authoritarian approaches to some health problems can work in settings where choice and freedom are limited, such as in wartime Britain, or in totalitarian states. But, overall, health suffers when people's choices are limited. In Britain we are fortunate to enjoy many freedoms and many choices, but we still have concerns about the health and safety of the most vulnerable – the elderly, those from ethnic minority communities and the young.

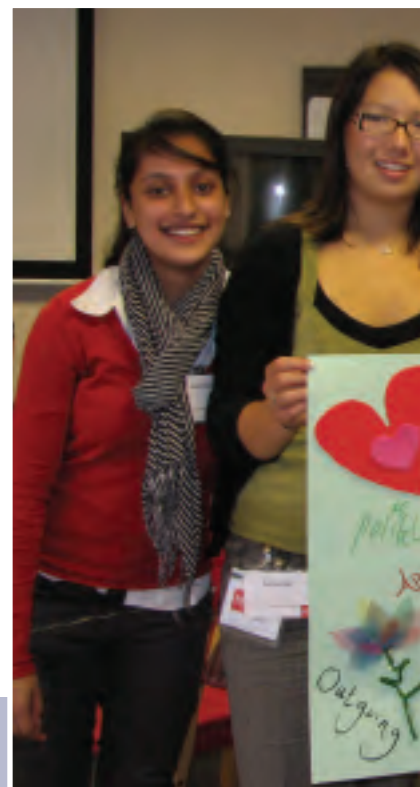
Reforms of children's policy under Every Child Matters emphasise the importance of working with children and young people to improve services they use. As a result there has been a huge shift in the way statutory and the voluntary sectors are expected to work with young people.

But not everyone has the skills to work with young people in a developmental way. To fill this gap, the Big Lottery has funded a partnership of youth organisations called 'Participation Works' to provide support to other organisations wishing to work in this way. The National Youth Agency has established quality standards for youth participation known as 'Hear by Right' and 'Changemakers'



supports young people to work at the heart of organisations to demonstrate just how effective young people can be in influencing change, when they are given the opportunity.

At RoSPA we have been keen to take advantage of all



with youth

this support, to help us focus on what children and young people need in order to be safe and stay safe.

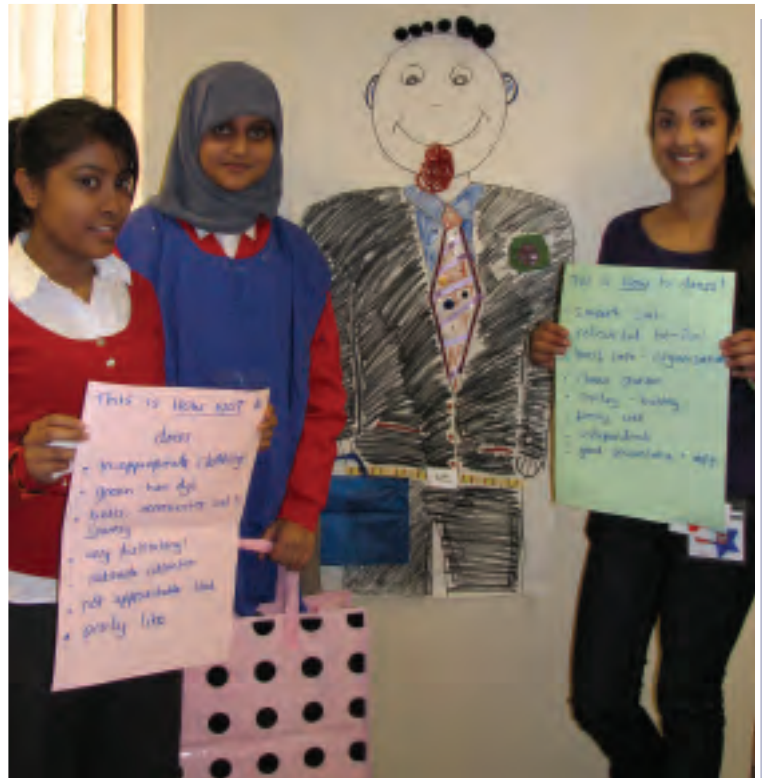
Earlier this year Partnership Works led a workshop for 20 senior staff at RoSPA, exploring how young people already contribute to RoSPA's work in injury prevention, but also examining how they could contribute more. We were joined by a RoSPA trustee and the chair of our safety education committee. We looked at different approaches that could help us achieve RoSPA's aims, while enabling young people to contribute their ideas.

Some key learning emerged: We need to listen more, and act on what young people say; we must avoid tokenism, but take young people's participation to the heart of the organisation to achieve both our strategic objectives and improve the delivery of

projects and services for young people – and young people need to feel ownership of what we do of it is to be meaningful and – importantly – effective.

As a result we decided that we needed a member of staff who was going to take responsibility for developing our work with young people. We also decided that we should involve young people at every stage in the selection and appointment of that key person.

We began by working with young people already working for RoSPA – and we were fortunate that our new head of HR was enthusiastic about the idea. Sarah Baker had contacts in other organisations who had been through



a similar process. We hoped young RoSPA staff would have insights into the way young people think about safety in the 21st century, and would also be able to suggest ways to get the best out of candidates on the day. In exchange the young staff would receive training in interviewing and appointment procedures, building capacity in

tasks including shortlisting, interviewing, running assessment tasks and observing how the applicants worked with groups of young people.

The next step was to recruit a younger group to help us develop the person specification and to be willing to work with the candidates and give an honest opinion about their qualities in youth engage-

We hoped young RoSPA staff would have insights into the way young people think about safety in the 21st century

the organisation and developing their own career prospects.

After two days of hard work with our young staff we had a job title (youth liaison worker) a job description, a job advertisement, a series of tasks for the applicants and volunteers to help with the various

ment. We wrote to several contacts in local schools, and two, Selly Park and Swanshurst School, responded positively. Both are girls' schools and both serve a mainly Asian Muslim population. Pupils aged 15-18 committed to two days working with us. A former work experience student also joined us from her new course at Birmingham University.

Cassius' new job

On our first day the girls got to know us, and each other, through a series of lively activities. Then they got down to the task of 'designing' their ideal youth liaison worker. Using craft materials, words and music they created a clear picture of the kind of person we should appoint: friendly, approachable, knowledgeable, smartly dressed but with a hint of fun, a good listener, a good communicator.

Later, we explored the procedures for appointing staff. We asked the girls to make an award to someone in another group, making a 'trophy' or prize from a just a single sheet of newspaper and making a speech to explain the reason for the award.

Each group came up with a unique object – a scroll, a bunch of flowers- even a box of newspaper chocolates, but also a unique reason for the award. Some awards were presented for skills - singing in front of the group during the earlier session, or a quality – being friendly, or for physical attributes – having beautiful eyes. Then we discussed how it felt to get an award – and how it felt not to get an award. We discussed how candidates would feel as there was only one person who would be successful – and how we respect people and manage the process so that it is as open and transparent as possible. Then we discussed whether their awards were 'fair' – could anyone win an award for beautiful eyes? If the criteria were known before the awards were presented would that make it more fair?

From these discussions Sarah drew out almost all of current employment law. She emphasised the importance



of treating candidates fairly and the huge responsibility involved in helping us to choose the right person for the job.

At the end of the day both teachers were delighted with the work the girls had done –

We discussed how it felt to get an award and how it felt not to get an award

and one invited Sarah to speak to visit the school to work with their A level business studies group. We agreed that the list of criteria they had developed would form an important part of the overall appointment process.

When the day of the appointment came we were full of anticipation. We saw three excellent candidates, who

had been told that as part of the process they would be working with groups of young people. They had one pre-prepared task and one which they had to prepare on the spot. Students and young RoSPA staff provided feed-

back using pre-prepared grids and these scores were considered alongside the other activities – presentation, formal interview, a telephone and e-mail task.

Finally young people were presented with a certificate recording their training in recruitment and appointment, and gift voucher to spend on something of their own choice. What did they think of the experience? 'Great.' 'We know we have helped you

find the right person.' 'How do we get a job at RoSPA?'

And how was it for the candidate? 'A very rigorous process for a part time job.' 'Enjoyable but exhausting!' 'You will certainly get the right person as a result of this process.'

And the result? Our new youth liaison worker is settling in well. His first undertaking is to host a meeting for interested organisations in February. Cassius has a huge task to develop our relationships with local youth agencies, and through them to find opportunities for us to work with young people in meaningful ways. But because young people were at the heart of his appointment, we feel confident he will succeed.

If you would like to help Cassius develop our work with young people on injury prevention, please contact him (cfrancis@rospa.com)

Cinema debut

The newly named RBK RoadSTARS (previously Road Safety and Travel Awareness Student Council) gathered at the Odeon Cinema in Kingston to mark the opening of their new road safety cinema advert 'What's your choice?'

The Kingston students worked hard in conjunction with the production team, from the initial ideas, to casting and a lucky two even starred in the final advert. The ad targets pedestrians and young drivers, who are among the highest road casualty groups in London.

Goldie Aboutorabi of Tiffin Girls' School, chair of the RoadSTARS and star of the advert said "The RoadSTARS project has certainly given us, as young people, a big say in how we educate people our age in issues of road safety and sustainable travel.

"This advert represents a huge piece of work for this group of students and the use of this type of advertising is an excellent way of reaching as many people as possible. We are extremely pleased with the end result and it

looked fantastic on the big screen. This is a most fitting way to round off this year for the group."

The 30 second hard hitting advert shows two sides of a story where a young couple meet a young driver in an uncompromising situation. The couple are having fun, walking to the cinema, and the boy carelessly steps into the road without looking. The young driver is driving too fast to be able to stop in time and this has tragic consequences.

Among the guests at the premiere, was the Mayor Councillor David Berry who said "To see the younger generation taking a keen interest in these important issues is really heartening; sustainable travel and road safety in particular are not necessarily the most exciting things for teenagers to get enthusiastic about! The series of achievements that they have had this year is full credit to them and they can only be examples to the rest of London."

For more information on this, contact Sam Merison 020 8547 5312.



Texting danger

Texting behind the wheel impairs driving skills more than being drunk or high, according to new research carried out by TRL for the Royal Automobile Club Foundation. Despite the danger, 48 per cent of UK drivers aged 18 - 24 admit to using short message services (SMS) while driving - a group already at much higher risk of being involved in a crash.

The RAC Foundation is calling for urgent investment in a high-profile education cam-

paign, designed to raise awareness among those young people who have grown up with mobile phones, that texting and driving puts themselves, their friends, and other road users at unacceptable risk.

The RAC Foundation and TRL used TRL's driving simulator to research the effects of writing, reading and ignoring text messages on the driving skills of a test group of 17 - 24 year old motorists. In all key measures of driving performance, young people who were texting and driving were badly affected:

Reaction times deteriorated by more than one-third (35 per cent). This was worse than alcohol at the legal limit (12 per cent slower) and driving under the influence of cannabis (21 per cent slower)

Drivers drifted out of their lane more often. Steering control was 91 per cent worse, compared to 35 per cent worse when under the influence of cannabis.

The ability to maintain a safe following distance fell.

TRL's experts concluded that "In real world traffic situations, it is suggested that poorer control of vehicle speed, lateral position, and increased reaction times in this situation would increase the likelihood of collision dramatically."

Road warning to children

Government is taking a new approach to warning children about the dangers they can face on our roads, following research that shows today's 6-11 year olds need bolder and more forthright communication about road safety than ever before.

A new £1.5m THINK! campaign unveiled by road safety minister Jim Fitzpatrick graphically spells out the dangers of not crossing the road safely and highlights the need to 'stop, look and listen' every time.

Jim Fitzpatrick said "More than 9,000 children were killed or hurt on British roads last year. This tragically underlines why we must continue to teach

our children how to safely use the road.

"Previous Government campaigns have been very effective in teaching children about road safety. But because today's 6-11 year olds are exposed to new media like computer games and the internet their attitudes to communications have become more sophisticated. This means they need the real world dangers of not using roads safely spelled out in a new, more realistic way.

'Tales of the Road' was devised following in-depth research with both parents and children who felt that a forthright campaign showing the consequences of both good

and bad road safety behaviour was needed to make an impression on today's children.

The campaign uses animated characters to tell a series of cautionary tales each focusing on a different aspect of road safety. The first advert, 'The Boy Who Did Not Stop, Look and Listen', aims to demonstrate to children the importance of taking care when crossing or playing near roads.

The television adverts will be accompanied by a new website with interactive games for children and educational material for teachers and parents. Visit <http://www.direct.gov/talesoftheroad.gov.uk>

Playday comes of age in

The research gives an interesting insight into the ways that children and young people experience risk in play, and has identified several interesting themes:

- Children do engage in risky play or activities, and these risks are sometimes commercial or adult-led and managed risks
- Children are aware of adults' fears about risk and, in general, agree with them
- Nevertheless, children say they undertake more risks when adults are not present
- Some children express a desire to take more risks
- Children's opportunities for risk taking are also constrained by limited opportunities for play in general
- Children are sophisticated assessors of risk
- Children enjoy taking risks and gain benefits from doing so

Children and young people did talk about activities such as climbing trees and playing on playground equipment, especially when prompted, but they tended to focus on organised and managed activities.

This research suggests that

“Give us a go!” presents findings from a qualitative study of children and young people's experiences and perceptions of risk in play. It was produced for Playday 2008. Playday is a national campaign, now in its 21st year. It is organised by Play England, working in partnership with counterparts in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

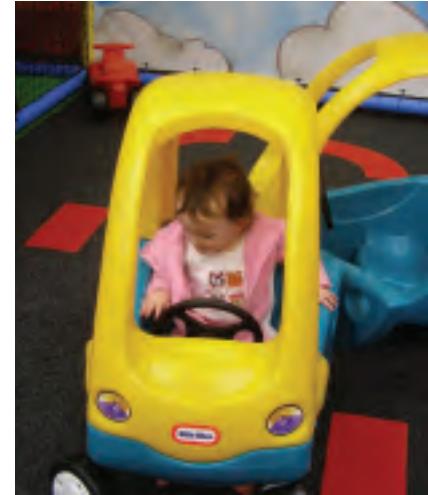
children now live in a culture where an important element of opportunities for fun which involves risk are opportunities which are managed, adult-led and commercial.

Other research on risk and play suggests that there is a shift in the way that children play and take risks. Gill (2007) says that children's lives are far more constrained than they were 30 years ago and children have less unstructured free time. Children spend four times more time being looked after by their parents than they did in 1975 (Gill 2007).

This relative lack of freedom may explain the shift towards more managed activities. Children and young people have their independence constrained, by school, after

school activities and a lack of freedom to play outside. Researchers saw from the focus groups that, in some cases, children and young people may be more likely to take risks when adults are not present. The fact that children today are looked after by an adult for longer periods may have a bearing upon the degree of risk to which children subject themselves.

Adults' fears about the physical dangers inherent in risky play may also impact on the amount, and types, of risks that children take. It would be simplistic to suggest that children are very keen to take risks which parental fears prevent. When children and young people are prevented from taking risks because of adult con-



straints, they are, in general, happy with the boundaries that are provided for them and accept rules as sensible.

They present a picture of sharing their parents' risk assessment rather than being coerced into inactivity by anxious parents – and indeed the presence of others including parents could sometimes provide encouragement to take a risk especially for the first time.

Nevertheless, they do sometimes want to push beyond parents' judgements. Young people described specific occasions or contexts when they either had done, or would do, more risky activities when their parents are not around.

A more obvious constraint on risk taking than parental prohibitions was limited opportunities for play in general. Children and young people expressed a desire for more freedom, novelty and access to places where they could play.

However, such opportunities are reliant on parental or other adult input that may not always be available and they are expensive. They also do not provide the opportunities for physical challenge that other play opportunities provide.

It therefore seems impor-



new research

tant that children do not lose the element of risk from everyday play. Children do need to be given the opportunities to play independently so that more traditional and child led ways of taking risks in play are available to them, as well as commercially provided risks.

To support this, it is important to provide challenging play spaces, where children and young people can independently challenge themselves and where parents feel happy for them to go. There was support for this from the focus groups, when children and young people talked about having more places to play in their local neighbourhood.

Given the emphasis children place on commercial risk opportunities, parents and play workers are likely to need to work hard to encourage children to create their own opportunities for excitement and to build them into more everyday play opportunities.

Given that previous exper-

adult perspectives.

For instance, children talked about feeling sick and having butterflies in the stomach as a positive thing. They also sometimes enjoyed the feeling of being scared. Adults may not regard these feelings as beneficial, but for the children and young people in these focus groups they were some of the positively good things about risk taking.

The long-term benefits of risk taking cannot be ascertained from the focus group data, but these children and young people certainly expressed positive feelings. Children and young people described ways in which risk taking activities contribute to their social, physical and emotional development and talked about improved fitness levels, confidence, pride and self-esteem.

Researchers also carried out qualitative research with a wide variety of play providers across the UK, using a survey and focus groups.

It is important to provide challenging play spaces, where children and young people can independently challenge themselves

iences contribute to children's risk assessments, having the opportunity to build up experience of risks is likely to facilitate improvement in children's ability to assess risk. It may also be worthwhile for play providers to help children to develop their ability to assess risk using the strategies that children and young people already use.

The discussion in the focus groups also suggests that play providers should be wary of allowing the assumptions and feelings of adults to override those of children. Children's perspectives on the benefits of risk taking, and what they enjoy about risk taking, may differ from

The vast majority of providers (92 per cent) thought that, in general, there were not enough play opportunities that allow children to test and challenge themselves and that involve a level of risk.

Most felt that it was acceptable for children to be exposed to the risk of minor and easily recovered injuries such as bruises, grazes or sprains.

More than half said that there are occasions when they assess that the benefits to children of providing carefully planned, challenging play opportunities outweigh exposure to a risk of more serious injury.

There was a strong perception that, across the coun-



try, opportunities for children to test and challenge themselves in play involving a level of risk had decreased over the last 10 years.

The play providers who participated in the research said that the five factors that were most prevalent in limiting the extent to which they could offer play involving risk and challenge were:

- The providers' fear of litigation in relation to possible accidents (74 per cent)
- Insufficient resources to provide more challenging play opportunities (71 per cent)
- Over-cautious assessments of risk and danger by insurers and health and safety officers (54 per cent)
- The registration, regulation and inspection process involved in providing play opportunities (43 per cent)
- Strict adherence to the Health and Safety at Work Act (42 per cent)

In order to increase play opportunities involving challenge and risk, the play providers – who came from a wide range of backgrounds, including local authorities and the voluntary and private sectors – identified five measures that they would prioritise, in this order:

- Publicity campaigns to achieve a more realistic appreciation of risk in play and promoting the benefits to children of self-assessing risk (58 per cent)
- Better design and planning of play areas to provide more challenging play opportunities (44 per cent)
- Training for play workers in delivering adventurous and challenging play (42 per cent)
- Additional resources to provide more challenging play opportunities (41 per cent)
- Training for senior managers, insurers, and health and safety officers in relation to risk and play (35 per cent).

The Playday campaign appears well timed, since those who are working in the field clearly recognise the need for children to have opportunities for play that are challenging and involve risk, and have identified publicity and promotional campaigns as being one of the most important mechanisms for bringing about positive change.

Full details of the research can be found at http://www.playday.org.uk/playday_campaigns/2008_give_us_a_go/2008_research.aspx

New young drivers are target

The first session of the 2008 Mega Drive Tour started at Ystrad Mynach College in September with students from the child care and early years groups taking part.

Mega Drive is a multi-agency project between Capita Symonds Road Safety Team, trading standards, Red Cross, South Wales Fire and Rescue, Drugaid, Fusion, Institute of Advanced Motorists, Gwent Association of Approved Driving Instructors, and the five unitary authorities in south east Wales.

The initiative is aimed at 16 – 17 year olds and is designed to educate prospective young drivers about the responsibility of driving a vehicle and give them a positive attitude before they get behind the wheel.

New young drivers between the ages of 17 and 24 are involved in a disproportionately large number of road accidents, holding 11 per cent of the licences yet involved in 25 per cent of collisions. The initiative aims to address this disparity and develop good driving skills in young people in Gwent.

At each venue, participants visited 10 interactive workstations. They found out about



aspects which are important to driving a vehicle including: their fitness to drive a vehicle, their ability to foresee potential hazards, in-car safety, what can cause a crash in the first place and how to deal with one if they are first on the scene as well as the effects and of drugs and alcohol on driving behaviour. The session included a 15-minute drive, under the guidance of an Approved Driving Instructor.

Golden King

A former member of the Under 17 Car Club has graduated to gold grade advanced driving before his 18th birthday.

David King of Shefford, Bedfordshire, impressed Eric Simpson the regional senior examiner who tested him.

He wrote "David is only 17 years old but he comes across as a driving enthusiast who clearly possess natural ability. He arrived in a well-presented vehicle and after a thorough cockpit drill he produced a very safe, sensible and systematic drive around a varied test route.

"He demonstrated good, smooth car control and he was able to make the vehicle flow nicely. He showed very good judgement on the motorway section."

David said "I was obviously chuffed to get gold first time. I'd like to thank the Under 17 Car Club for all of my tuition from the age of 12-17, my parents for taking me to and from the club, and also Mel Day for his help in getting me to gold standard. In the near future I will be considering taking the steps to become an observer."

Parents can do so much more

Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety says parents must do more to step in and prevent tragedy from happening on our roads.

A study of 14-21 year olds proves they behave very differently in cars when they are with their friends, causing intense levels of distraction.

'More relaxed' is how they describe their behaviour, but this harmless phrase actually means they do not wear seatbelts, drivers talk and text on their mobile phones, they drive faster to impress the opposite sex, girls put on make-up, they eat, drink, light cigarettes, play loud music and generally show off. This 'multi-tasking' is often achieved by steering with elbows or knees with their eyes off the road.

As the car travels along, passengers freely admit to moving about and even dancing, hanging out of windows and shouting to attract attention, pulling up the hand-

brake unexpectedly and fiddling with lights and stereo equipment to annoy the driver.

'Big' nights out involving alcohol, further fuel immature behaviour such as nudging the driver, pulling the steering wheel and kicking the driver's seat from behind.

Said Linda Sanderson, communications manager for Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety: "Our children want the independence and freedom a car provides, but this sort of behaviour will kill someone and the driver could get 14 years in prison. Compared with driving alone, the risk of a fatal collision for young drivers is 39 per cent higher with one passenger, 85 per cent higher with two, and 182 per cent higher with three or more."

The partnership will hold a programme of workshops for parents to be held in sixth form colleges across Lancashire.



Fleet Solutions

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Do you drive or operate a minibus for work purposes?

If so then make sure you have all the necessary training and procedures in place to keep you and your passengers safe. RoSPA offer a suite of courses and products that will ensure organisations comply with legislation and have the skills to ensure the well-being of all travelling in the minibus.

Driver Development Training – Minibus

This course aims to develop a correct and systematic approach to minimising risk in the driving environment and to promote understanding of the principles of defensive driving. The course will deal with issues specific to minibus driving and will ensure delegates complete the course with enhanced skills.

The RoSPA National Minibus Test

Every minibus driver should consider taking the test. Not only will they have the satisfaction of knowing that they have achieved the RoSPA high standard, but their organisation and passengers will be confident and comfortable knowing that they are properly qualified.

Call 0121 248 2032 to find out more about these training opportunities.

RSDR170 Essential Minibus Driving

Legislation relating to minibuses and driving licences has changed considerably over recent years. This popular publication offers a host of hints and advice

Members: £5.00. Non-members: £5.75

RSGEN146 Minibus Safety – a Code of Good Practice

Updated for 2008, the revised publication includes advice on how changes to the law about seatbelts and child restraints, tachographs, speed limiters and work-related road safety, apply to minibuses

Members: £6.00. Non-members: £7.20

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